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New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 6th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PETRESKI (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

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GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

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The meeting was cal ed to order at 3.15 p.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan) said that the fruits of increasing global prosperity were unevenly distributed, and the potential consequences of not moving rapidly to rectify that situation could include famines, epidemics, civil strife and mass migration. The reasons for the current situation were largely found in an external economic environment inimical to the growth prospects of most countries. Remedying the lopsided pattern of global economic growth required measures to ensure that all countries could compete on equal terms for a share of the world market. Yet the developed countries were reluctant to accept that specific measures were required at the global level to break the cycle of poverty.

2. The three prerequisites for development were access to finance, access to markets and the transfer of technology and skills. The Uruguay Round had resulted in some progress towards a more equitable trading environment, but the interests of the developing countries had been marginalized. In agriculture, massive subsidization in the developed countries had been legitimized in return for promises of reform, and in services, a promising area for countries such as his own, the movement of persons had been virtually excluded from commitment by the developed countries. Overall financial flows to the developing countries had increased, but mainly in the form of speculative private financial flows, while official development assistance had registered significant declines. Moreover, obstacles to technology transfer had increased rather than diminished.

3. The United Nations was capable of playing a meaningful role in ensuring that the necessary prerequisites for economic growth and development were in place. It remained irreplaceable as a forum for building consensus on measures to promote development.

4. Mr. DELANEY (Papua New Guinea) said that, in recent months, development issues had been overshadowed by the attention given to reform of the political aspects of the United Nations. To his delegation, however, the essence of reform lay in bringing to the forefront the issue of economic and social development and reducing the disparity between rich and poor.

5. Many developing countries had done their utmost to foster real economic growth. His own country had embarked on extreme structural adjustment programmes, overhauled its macroeconomic policy to suit foreign investment, changed investment guidelines to promote trade liberalization and changed its land ownership legislation while also reducing social sector spending and raising spending in other areas in order to increase foreign exchange income.

6. His Government, in keeping with the new partnership forged between sustainable development and environmental conservation, had taken bold steps to protect its vast natural resources and the South Pacific region had recently

adopted a code of conduct on logging in order to promote sustainable forest management and allow controlled export of forest resources.

7. While many developing countries had done as they had been asked, often at the expense of their own nationals, the developed countries had yet to deliver fully on the assistance promised at the Rio Conference. Development assistance was not charity, but part of the collective partnership deal. Both developed and developing partners had become equally dependent on one another, and their interrelationship was very important to the future of an agenda for development.

8. Mr. AYEWAH (Nigeria) said that his delegation attached the greatest importance to the question of international economic cooperation. The benefits of the recent growth in the world economy had not been evenly distributed among countries, a trend that did not augur well for the stability of the global economy. It called for a renewed sense of partnership and cooperation between the developed and developing countries.

9. Efforts to foster growth and development continued to be frustrated by low commodity prices, dwindling resource flows, absence of investment, restrictions on the transfer of technology, unpredictable global monetary and financial systems and a crushing external debt burden. Africa's external debt was estimated at US $320 billion, and unless a determined effort was made to resolve the question, its prospects for economic growth and development remained dim. His delegation stressed that it was urgent for the international community to deliver on its commitment to Africa by implementing the programmes contained in the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

10. The recent plethora of global conferences underscored the concern of the international community about the need to address critical social and economic issues, and his delegation welcomed the recommendations and decisions emanating therefrom. It also supported the recommendation to hold an international conference on the issues of South-South cooperation as well as the question of international migration and development. In a world of growing interdependence, development was a shared responsibility.

11. For Africa, development was a question of survival; Nigeria, therefore, welcomed and supported the ongoing effort to formulate an agenda for development, which should provide a framework for the promotion and implementation of existing international commitments in true partnership between the developed and developing countries.

12. His delegation supported efforts to reform and revitalize the United Nations system, but viewed with serious concern any move to abolish development agencies like the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization. Those two institutions had demonstrated their ability to contribute to the development process for the benefit of developing countries in particular and the world economy as a whole.

13. Mr. DANESH-YAZDI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, in an interdependent world, it was obvious that economic and social development prospects depended on

policies of individual countries, but also on the effectiveness of macroeconomic policies. The hopes for the long-awaited global partnership for economic and social development which had prevailed in the developing world at the end of the cold war had dimmed. New resource flows had not materialized, and new forms of protectionism and conditionalities were jeopardizing implementation of existing agreements. Despite the efforts of developing countries to mobilize their domestic resources to meet their basic needs, unacceptable restrictions at the international level remained unchanged. The full and effective participation of developing countries in the international economic decision-making process was imperative if an international economic environment conducive to economic growth in the developing world was to be created.

14. Iran attached great importance to South-South cooperation and believed that the convening of an international conference on that subject constituted a concrete measure to foster that important interaction. Greater cooperation and coordination among developing countries would provide a solid basis for collective self-reliance.

15. The agenda for development currently being elaborated should take an action-oriented, holistic approach to development challenges and should place the issue of sustainable economic growth and development at the centre of the Organization's concerns. The institutional reforms needed for the implementation and follow-up of that agenda, though important, must not overshadow the crucial needs of developing countries.

16. Although the responsibility for combating environmental degradation rested primarily with the developed countries whose unsustainable patterns of production and consumption were largely to blame for the degradation, they were trying to use environmental protection as a pretext for imposing unrealistic requirements on the industries and products of developing countries. Those requirements, as well as non-tariff barriers such as social clauses, contravened the principles of the newly established World Trade Organization (WTO).

17. In addition, the coercive economic measures and unilateral actions which some developed countries had taken against developing countries ran counter to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and other international instruments. The international community must eliminate such illegal practices.

18. In sum, the key elements on which the emergence of an equitable world economy depended were a favourable international economic environment; access for developing countries to the markets of developed countries; a solution to the external debt problem; elimination of new forms of protectionism in developed countries; an increase in official development assistance (ODA); adequate and equitable allocation of resources on the part of international financial institutions; transfer of technology on concessionary and preferential terms; measures to strengthen UNCTAD, UNIDO and the regional commissions; coordination between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, including WTO; a rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory global trading system; provision of substantial additional financial resources; and increased

flows of foreign direct investment and portfolio investment to all developing countries.

19. Mr. PEDROSO CUESTA (Cuba) said that the end of the cold war, economic globalization and reversal of the negative trends which some macroeconomic indicators had shown in the 1980s seemed to have led to an exaggerated optimism. On the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, the Committee should conduct an in-depth review of the status of international development cooperation and of the conditions underpinning an international economic order that was still essentially unjust and discriminatory.

20. Despite the Organization's important contributions to development over its five decades of existence, the failure to fulfil the goals and commitments set forth in the various international development strategies, problems in implementing the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and, more recently, the failure to act on the commitments made at the many international conferences held to date, especially in the area of finance made it clear what obstacles the Organization was facing in its efforts to achieve its economic and social goals.

21. Moreover, the steady decline in resources allocated to operational activities for development continued to undermine the system's credibility.

22. The liberalization and adjustment policies which many developing countries had adopted at the request of international financial institutions had proved unable to reconcile the objectives of macroeconomic stability and social development. Instead, they had widened economic and social gaps within and between countries and, in most cases, had aggravated the situation of poor and vulnerable sectors of society. The liberalization of the world economy and the deregulation of financial markets had made it harder to use economic means to further social goals and had shown how vulnerable developing countries were to flows of speculative capital.

23. The external debt crisis, the real deterioration of the terms of trade and the maintenance of restrictions on trade, technology and finance continued to hamper the efforts of developing countries. Moreover, some developed countries unilaterally maintained coercive economic measures against developing countries preventing the latter from participating more actively in world trade. It would not be possible to forge a new partnership for developing unless countries engaged in a renewed political dialogue that went beyond the usual rhetoric.

24. Mr. SZYMANSKI (Poland) said that the General Assembly should intensify its work on an agenda for development, in view of the many economic, social and environmental problems currently in evidence throughout the world. The integrated approach which should characterize that agenda should be reflected, in institutional form, in the merging of the Second and Third Committees.

25. To forge linkages among peace-keeping, humanitarian assistance and development, the Economic and Social Council should work more closely with the Security Council, inter alia, by providing it with reports on economic and

social developments that were particularly important for international peace and security. In addition, much more international cooperation was needed within the framework of the Economic and Social Council to promote development in Africa. Some innovative ideas had been put forward in that regard, such as extending the high-level segments of the Council's sessions to allow ministers to adopt specific measures and inviting representatives of non-governmental organizations and private companies to participate in the high-level discussions.

26. Efforts were under way to redefine the role of the Economic and Social Council in the new political situation, involving changes in both the substance and the methodology of its work. For example, the Council had already agreed to take steps to ensure coordinated follow-up to international conferences on economic, social and related issues, inter alia, by holding periodic meetings on specific issues and giving the regional commissions an important role in helping countries to implement the recommendations made at those conferences.

27. To minimize the social costs suffered by the countries that were making the transition to democracy and a market economy, the United Nations system should provide countries with opportunities to share information about their experiences and about the best international practices. Poland firmly believed that national efforts towards economic liberalization would create a positive economic environment and lay the foundations for future growth, and that those efforts should be supported by the international community. For its part, Poland had achieved the highest economic growth rate in Europe, as well as rising labour productivity and a developing private sector. Since the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) had announced their willingness to open their structures to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Poland was currently adapting its existing institutions to the new requirements.

28. Poland had supported the convening of global conferences in the 1990s, and felt that the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of those meetings should be monitored by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. However, those recommendations could not be implemented successfully without greater involvement on the part of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. In that connection, he welcomed the establishment of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), whose policies were implemented with the full participation of the World Bank.

29. Mr. CAMACHO OMISTE (Bolivia) said that the Committee must not lose sight of the fact that its primary duty was to humanity as a whole, since the issues it debated affected the lives of human beings throughout the world. While its work methods were in need of improvement, it must not become discouraged by the amount of time required to reach agreements and to see them put into practice.

30. Given the efforts which most countries were making to adapt their structures and institutions to the current requirements of the world economy the current trend towards cut-backs in cooperation and financing had come as a

surprise. The agenda for development, which should be completed at the current session, should serve as a guide to Governments in that regard.

31. After briefly analysing the reasons for the success of the Marshall Plan, which was sometimes held up as a model of cooperation in the modern era, he noted that the United Nations, which was a focal point for international cooperation, provided the appropriate institutional framework for a universal plan to eradicate poverty. At the same time he stressed that each country must ensure that its own domestic structures were able to do their part. To that end, Bolivia had established a Ministry of Sustainable Development and a Ministry of Human Development.

32. Bolivia had maintained macroeconomic stability since 1985, as shown by its rate of inflation, which was the lowest in the world. It had embarked on a second phase of structural reforms, which included a capitalization programme designed to attract private investment to sectors traditionally administered by State enterprises and to modernize their management; a citizen participation programme under which the administration and resources of basic public services were transferred to urban, rural and indigenous communities; and an education reform programme that took ethnic and cultural diversity into account and provided for bilingual education.

33. To give new impetus to its national agenda and to contribute actively to the regional plans under way, Bolivia had offered to host the second Summit of the Americas on sustainable development, which would take place in the second half of 1996.

34. Mr. HOSNY (Egypt) endorsed the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

35. Noting that peace, stability and security could not prevail in a world torn apart by flagrant injustices and an ever-widening gap in the standards of living between developed and developing countries, he said that the United Nations must fulfil its mandated role in order to redress the situation. Moreover, common efforts aimed at establishing a new world economic order were being undermined by the resurgence of unacceptable actions aimed at introducing new conditionalities for international economic cooperation which, moreover, infringed on national sovereignty. Noting that the current level of official development assistance flows was the lowest it had been in 10 years, he said that resources devoted to the development and stockpiling of weapons of mass destruction would be better used for social and economic development activities, particularly in the developing countries.

36. There was an urgent need to formulate policies and find lasting solutions to the external debt problem of developing countries at the bilateral and multilateral levels, particularly in Africa.

37. He expressed the hope that one of the main tasks of the World Trade Organization (WTO) would be to correct existing trade imbalances and eliminate impediments to free trade and that a cooperation agreement between the United

Nations and WTO would be rapidly concluded. He also reiterated his delegation's support for the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

38. A thorough review of the role, resources and structure of the international financial institutions must be conducted. The structural adjustment programmes formulated by the Bretton Woods institutions should be reviewed so as to minimize their social costs to many developing countries. Greater interaction and coordination between those institutions and other bodies of the United Nations system, including the specialized agencies, were also necessary. Welcoming the call for the enhanced implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, he called for intensified efforts to restructure the economies of African countries and hence to strengthen regional integration. In that respect, the role of the Economic Commission for Africa should be reinforced through the allocation of additional resources.

39. The endeavour to craft a globally balanced agenda for development should focus not only on country or regional interests but also on a genuine partnership aimed at fulfilling the right to development for all peoples, particularly the developing countries. The anticipated reform within the United Nations must enable it to fully address the real concerns of the overwhelming majority of its members and the centrality of development-related issues in the United Nations must be restored while strengthening the Organization's ability to fulfil that role.

40. It was crucial to establish effective follow-up mechanisms to ensure that the commitments and recommendations agreed to at the various global conferences which had been held in the last few years were implemented in a timely fashion. In that regard, there was merit in convening an international conference on the financing of development.

41. The donor community should increase its resources for the financing of United Nations operational activities for development on a continuous, predictable and assured basis. Similarly, a revision of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 should lead to the allocation of additional resources for the implementation of programmes and mandated activities, especially development activities.

42. The peace process in the Middle East had opened prospects for economic cooperation which would put into productive use the region's human and material resources. Egypt looked forward to the establishment of a comprehensive, just and durable peace in order to fully free such a potential for the benefit of all the parties concerned.

43. Mr. WISNUMURTI (Indonesia) said that while the world economic situation had improved, economic stagnation and marginalization continued in the developing countries, and over 2 billion people still lived in dire poverty. The indebtedness of developing countries continued to rise, further widening the chasm between them and the developed countries.

44. An agenda for development should provide the policy framework for the implementation of existing international commitments relating to finance, external debt, international trade and science and technology. It should also ensure that the United Nations continued to play a central role in development. In that connection, the ongoing reform of the Organization should be based on the principle of universal participation of all Member States in, and democratization of, the Organization. Any proposal that sought to undermine those principles, or the role of the United Nations in development, was unacceptable. It was also important for the United Nations to cooperate more closely with the Bretton Woods institutions.

45. In the area of international trade, there was a glaring attempt to introduce protectionism in various guises such as conditionalities relating to the environment, labour laws, human rights and other social clauses in contravention of the Final Act of the Uruguay Round. That constituted not only an obstacle to the full realization of a transparent, open, predictable and non-discriminatory international trading regime but could also greatly undermine world economic growth. The paucity and unpredictability of external financial flows also hampered the promotion of sustained economic growth and development. In that connection, the international community should give priority attention to the critical situation in Africa.

46. In order to ensure a lasting solution to the perennial debt crisis, a once-for-all arrangement was needed that would allow the countries concerned to resume their growth.

47. In order to strengthen economic growth for all a genuine global partnership between developed and developing countries was needed. Indeed, the idea had been accepted, as reflected in General Assembly resolution 49/95. Every effort should therefore be made to move the process forward. Finally, since South-South cooperation was indispensable to advance the collective self-reliance of the developing countries, the international community must lend its full support to strengthen South-South cooperation.

48. Mr. NOOR (United Arab Emirates) said that international economic cooperation was a key factor in ensuring peace and stability for all peoples. Notwithstanding encouraging developments in the world economy, the developing countries continued to be adversely affected by a heavy debt burden, unfavourable exchange rates and problems relating to the transfer of technology. The plight of many developing countries continued to deteriorate, with a consequent negative impact on the world economy, peace and stability.

49. His delegation supported the steps being taken to restructure the United Nations in the economic and social sectors, particularly with a view to strengthening its capacity with respect to research, policy analysis, operational activities and humanitarian assistance. The restructuring effort must fully respect the universal nature of the United Nations, and the principles of the equality of States in decision-making, non-interference in the internal affairs of States and equitable geographical distribution in decision-making bodies.

50. Activities undertaken to give effect to the decisions adopted at recent United Nations conferences, and those to be adopted at the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) must respect the cultural and religious characteristics of each State and society.

51. His Government was a signatory to the agreement establishing the World Trade Organization and looked forward to an improved international economic regime which would eliminate barriers to free trade, increase market access and reduce the marginalization of developing countries. His country had emphasized the importance of human development in its economic and social development efforts. It had provided assistance to development projects in many developing countries, particularly the least developed among them in Africa and Asia, with a view to strengthening international peace, security and stability.

52. Mr. ABDELLAH (Tunisia) endorsed the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

53. Underscoring the importance which his delegation attached to the question of international migration, he said that while the phenomenon provided benefits to both host and sending countries, difficulties also arose with respect to the fundamental rights of migrants and human rights in general. Accordingly, the United Nations should convene a conference on international migration and development with a view to devising solutions to the problems the phenomenon generated.

54. His country had spared no effort during the past 30 years in fostering cooperation to combat all forms of dependency and underdevelopment in Africa and would continue to work towards those objectives. The countries of Africa had agreed in various regional cooperation agreements to make optimum use of their natural and human resources. He welcomed the fact that the Economic and Social Council had focused on Africa in its general debate in 1995 and he stressed the need for concrete follow-up measures to facilitate the development of that continent.

55. Turning to the work under way on an agenda for development, he said that his delegation welcomed the consensus which had emerged underscoring the need for a new partnership among nations which focused on sustainable development and placed the individual at the centre of the development effort. The increasing interdependence among nations should prompt all States, in particular, the wealthiest among them, to devise new forms of cooperation for the next century.

56. The increasing globalization of international relations also provided an opportunity for the United Nations to consolidate its universal character and its contribution to development. To that end, the Bretton Woods institutions and the United Nations should cooperate more closely and expand their joint activities with a view to rationalizing their contributions to development. An improved division of labour was needed, particularly in the policy-making and operational spheres.

57. The challenges which faced the developing countries in the improved world economic environment - for example, the race to secure markets, attract foreign investment and acquire technology - could prove beneficial provided that those countries were able to adapt their economies to the new requirements of the world market. Regional and interregional cooperation were therefore essential. To that end, the members of the Arab Maghreb Union had elaborated a number of cooperation agreements which had culminated in the establishment of a free trade area, a step which his delegation hoped would lead to ever-increasing integration in the region.

58. Stability, security and development were the shared responsibility of all nations, and the wealthy countries should strive to reduce imbalances among peoples. Such cooperation would, in the medium and long term, benefit donor countries as well.

59. His country had made cooperation with its European partners a priority, and had signed an agreement on association with the European Union calling for the establishment of a free trade zone. The agreement would link his country's economy closely with that of its partners to the north.

60. Mindful of the priority which his country attached to the human and cultural dimensions of international relations, it had worked energetically to strengthen its political and cultural ties with the countries of the Mediterranean basin. Those efforts were carried out within the framework of a contract for progress and development whose aim was to establish a new order built on a foundation of political stability, economic and social development, democracy and security.

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.